

them safe. We need a program just to build new schools because some are so old that you cannot do anything with them. It is more efficient to just tear the schools down and build new schools.

Now this is the big city of New York that has this problem. I am here to talk about it. I assure you it does not take much imagination to know that Chicago, St. Louis, Los Angeles, the problem exists in most of our big city districts. Large numbers of young people, we have a million students in New York City, and as of last September, 91,000 of those students did not have a place to sit.

So I thank the gentleman and I just wanted to highlight, we are moving into the process now where we are going to talk in detail about this comprehensive agenda of the President. Construction is on the agenda. I understand certain proposals have been made that a certain percentage of the money go to inner city districts. Some people are worried about too much going into inner city districts. It cannot be too much. The problem is grave. The problem is an emergency.

If we are going to do anything about young children, the first thing we should do is think about safe places that are conducive to learning. Physical facilities are basic, and I hope they get a lot of support from the President's construction program in his comprehensive education program.

Mr. PALLONE. I want to thank the gentleman from New York [Mr. OWENS], and I again assure him that what he is talking about in New York City is throughout the country. We had some statistics about the General Accounting Office that says one-third of the Nation's schools needs major repair, outright replacement, 60 percent need work on major building features, sagging roof, cracked foundation, 46 percent lack even the basic electrical wiring to support computers, modems and modern communication technology.

My colleague talked about the magnitude in New York, but it is true throughout the country. I think that is why the school construction program the President is talking about has so much appeal because it really affects every district, every congressional district in this country, as do so many of these proposals the Democrats have put forward on education.

So I am just hopeful that our colleagues on the other side, the Republican leaders, who are in the majority, take heed of this because I think there is no question that education is a priority and that there is a lot more that can be done on the Federal level, and we as Democrats have put forward those proposals and we would like to have our Republican colleagues join us in passing those in this Congress before we adjourn. So thank you again, I appreciate the gentleman's comments.

THE AFRICAN GROWTH AND OPPORTUNITY ACT

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. BOB SCHAFER of Colorado). Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Louisiana [Mr. JEFFERSON] is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. JEFFERSON. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of H.R. 1432, the African Growth and Opportunity Act, on which the Trade Subcommittee of Ways and Means Committee conducted hearings yesterday. I am a proud co-author and original cosponsor of this important and historic legislation which will start the process of bringing African and United States economic interests together in the global marketplace.

The African Growth and Opportunity Act has been coauthored and received in an enthusiastic bipartisan spirit, led by our distinguished chairman of the Subcommittee on Trade, PHIL CRANE, as well as Congressmen RANGEL, MCDERMOTT, HOUGHTON, MATSUI and many others.

Yesterday we heard declarations of support from the Clinton administration, Speaker GINGRICH, former House Secretary Jack Kemp, former Mayor Dinkins and a host of other trade, investment, development, and diplomatic officials for this landmark legislation. It was, Mr. Speaker, an exciting day and exhibited the great inspiring unity the Congress is capable of when it puts aside party and strife and employs the talents of all of us to deal with national and international issues.

Mr. Speaker, the African Growth and Opportunity Act would establish as U.S. policy the path from developmental assistance to economic self-reliance through trade and investment for African countries committed to economic reform, market incentives, and private sector growth.

In addition, H.R. 1432 will establish several new initiatives to promote trade and investment in Africa, a few of which I will briefly outline. First, H.R. 1432 would direct the President to develop a plan for trade agreements to establish a United States/sub-Saharan Africa free trade area by the year 2020.

Second, H.R. 1432 would establish a United States/Africa economic forum to facilitate annual high-level discussions of bilateral and multilateral trade and investment policies modeled on the highly successful APEC forum that has worked so well to spur U.S. trade and investment in Asia.

Third, it directs OPIC to create a \$150 equity fund and \$500 million infrastructure fund for Africa, which will help lay the groundwork for private sector development. And fourth, H.R. 1432 proposes a market access initiative which would redirect an enhanced generalized system of preferences program to qualifying African countries, assisting the least competitive countries in Africa to access United States markets.

Mr. Speaker, I believe this legislation is important for four principal reasons. First, the development of a trade

policy with sub-Saharan Africa is important because the United States does not currently have a trade policy with this part of the world. So while many Asian and Latin American economies have flourished as a result of the influx of private investment and international trade, Africa has been almost exclusively relegated to developmental assistance.

Thirty years ago, the standards of living of Korea and Ghana were nearly equal. Today, Korea is a vibrant, industrial powerhouse, while Ghana is still a nation very much in economic transition. While there are numerous reasons to explain this difference, the critical distinction between Asia's and Africa's development has been Western investment and trade.

H.R. 1432 places our Government's imprimatur on trade and investment in Africa, a crucial catalyst for attracting further private sector investment in the region and on the continent.

Second, this bill lays the groundwork for enhanced private sector and infrastructure development in Africa, which will improve standards of living for the people of sub-Saharan Africa. Mr. Speaker, this is in the interest of our country, the United States.

Africa represents 10 percent of the world's population and possesses enormous untapped natural and human resources. Amid a dizzying array of mining, petroleum, and agricultural resources are an industrious and entrepreneurial people who yearn to compete in the global marketplace and represent an important future market for U.S. exports and thus for the creation of U.S. jobs.

But right now, many people in sub-Saharan Africa lack the basics: telephone and electricity service; clean running water; and essential medical technologies. Fortunately, we can help, and H.R. 1432 takes a giant step, through infrastructure development, free trade agreements, and market access initiatives, toward improving the standard of living for millions in sub-Saharan Africa.

It would promote foreign, direct investment in Africa through the two funds that I mentioned earlier. These funds are vital to Africa's development because of the 1,160 privately financed infrastructure projects around the world, only 6 percent occurred in Africa. And between 1984 and 1994, only 2 percent of the world's foreign investment was made in Africa.

Mr. Speaker, I urge all of my colleagues, Democrat and Republican, to support the African Growth and Opportunity Act, a bill that is good for America, good for Africa, and good for the cause of international economic development.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. HOEKSTRA. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on H.R. 2.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Michigan?

There was no objection.

EDUCATION EXCELLENCE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 7, 1997, the gentleman from Michigan [Mr. HOEKSTRA] is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the majority leader.

Mr. HOEKSTRA. Mr. Speaker, tonight I am joined by a number of my colleagues to talk about what my other colleagues were talking about in the previous hour, and that is education. And rather than going through a long introduction, I want to start right off with a quote that the President of the United States made on March 27, 1996. This was in a response to the Governors Summit on Education: Education Excellence. And the President said, and I cannot agree with him more, "We cannot ask the American people to spend more on education until we do a better job with the money we have got now."

This is the President of the United States about a year ago. That remark, along with some of the debate in Congress in 1996, led the committee that I chair, the Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations, to begin a project, which we call education at a crossroads, to ask and to find out what are we accomplishing and achieving with the money that we are spending today.

We started with a very basic question. We said, how many education programs are there?

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Went to the Education Department because, of course, in Washington we coordinate all of the education programs through one department. Wrong. We found out that they go through 39 different agencies. We have over 760 different programs, and we are spending over or in the neighborhood of \$100 billion per year on education today.

That is a very appropriate question to ask. It is the question that we must answer before we expand the 760. Actually, I think as we have worked on this, it is now over 780 programs, we now have to take a look at the 780 programs, the \$100 billion that we are spending, the 39 different agencies that this money is flowing through, because the focus here should not be on an education bureaucracy. Our focus needs to be on the kids. Before we have 10 new programs with \$50 billion of more spending, we need to take a look at whether and where this money is going and whether we are having an impact with it or not. We do not want to pour \$50 billion through a broken system.

Mr. Speaker, I have got some of my colleagues with me tonight to talk about this very issue. I would like to have one of my colleagues from Pennsylvania just briefly explain to us, we will have a dialogue, more of a dia-

logue tonight so that we can build off each other's comments about what is going on in education because we all have our own perspectives and our own learning about what is going on and we have got six of us here tonight. We will be able to share perspectives and learn from each other.

Tomorrow my colleague from Pennsylvania is going to be introducing or announcing a resolution that I think gets at the very issue about doing some important work to find out the kind of impact that we are having with the dollars today.

Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from Pennsylvania [Mr. PITTS].

Mr. PITTS. Mr. Speaker, I would like to speak really on behalf of millions of students, teachers, administrators and many Members of Congress to discuss one of the most important components of our American society, and that is our education system. I would like to talk about what can and should become an American initiative, sending more dollars to our Nation's classrooms.

Every citizen of this Nation agrees that children deserve an opportunity to excel. But this opportunity is inhibited when teachers and administrators are hampered by paperwork, time constraints and financial hindrances just to apply for Federal education grants. Tomorrow, as my colleague said, I will introduce a resolution entitled the dollars to the classroom resolution, calling for the Department of Education to provide more elementary and secondary dollars to the classrooms of our Nation's children.

My resolution calls for a change in the way we spend our Federal education dollars. For too long, Americans' hard-earned tax dollars have gone to bureaucracy and have churned through the Washington labyrinth instead of rightfully being placed into the classrooms, into the hands of someone who knows the name of your child.

Of the \$15.4 billion which goes to elementary and secondary programs, in the Federal Department of Education, the classroom may be lucky to see 65 percent. That means about \$5.4 billion is lost in the abyss of department studies, publications and grant administration.

To apply for a Department of Education grant, it takes nearly 216 steps, an average of 21 weeks. That is over 5 months of work for someone on the local level just to apply for a Federal grant.

Mr. HOEKSTRA. Mr. Speaker, is that 21 weeks before they may ever get an answer from the Education Department as to whether they are going to receive a grant?

Mr. PITTS. Mr. Speaker, that is correct.

Mr. HOEKSTRA. Mr. Speaker, it is my understanding that the Education Department very recently highlighted this as a significant accomplishment, getting it down to 21 weeks and 216 steps. I think until the Vice President became involved in this process, it

took 26 weeks and over 400 steps. But this is what the Education Department calls significant progress and moving towards education excellence by shortening the process of finding out whether a school district is actually going to have a grant accepted after they go through 216 steps and after 21 weeks.

Mr. PITTS. That is correct.

Mr. HOEKSTRA. Mr. Speaker, that is improvement. It may be improvement, but it is still not very good.

Mr. PITTS. As a former classroom teacher myself, I know that it would not be very encouraging to me to have to spend hours upon hours to apply for something that I had no guarantee of receiving.

But I think Americans would rather see their tax dollars at work providing more teachers, teacher aides, purchasing materials, supplies, updated software, calculators, textbooks, and even seeing the American classroom connected to the Internet brought into the new information age. The classroom is where the action is. The classroom is where knowledge grows and learning takes place.

This dollars to the classroom initiative would call upon the Federal Department of Education and State and local agencies to see that 95 cents of every Federal dollar would get to the local school district. And of those Federal dollars that get to the local school district, 95 cents of every Federal dollar would get into the classroom, into the hands of someone that knows your child's name. If this actually happened, roughly \$1,800 more could be available in each classroom across the United States.

We heard the quote from President Clinton that we cannot ask Americans to spend more on education until we do a better job with the money that we have got now. And for \$10 to purchase flash cards, a student could practice her timetables with a friend. For \$50 for a globe or a set of maps, children improve their geography, their knowledge of nations across the seas. For \$1,500, we can buy a computer with enough desk top space and Internet access to allow every student access to a vast amount of information available at their fingertips.

So this really is about kids, about practical ways to see that they benefit from Federal education tax dollars. I think for the sake of our Nation's kids, we should all put our children first.

Mr. HOEKSTRA. Mr. Speaker, the gentleman has taken kind of a revolutionary approach. He is focusing getting dollars to the classroom, getting them to the kids, getting them to the teachers, to the local administration where they can actually make an impact.

The other visual that we use frequently here, this is a picture of Washington, DC. I know my colleague is a freshman but I know that he is very well aware that when we walk across this street over here and we walk to the Capitol to vote, we call it Independence Avenue. That is what the